

July 16 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998

Statement on Signing the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998

July 16, 1998

Today, I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 3130, the "Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998." My Administration has conducted an unprecedented campaign to increase parental responsibility to ensure that parents support their children. We have had many successes. Through tougher enforcement, we have collected a record \$13.4 billion in child support, an increase of 68 percent since 1992, with 1.4 million more families now receiving child support. In addition, we located one million delinquent parents during the first 9 months of using a new collection system that tracks parents across State lines—a system initiated as part of the 1996 welfare law, and first proposed by my Administration in 1994. On paternity establishment, which is often the crucial first step in child support cases, in 1997, a record 1.3 million paternities were established, two and a half times as many as in 1992. Last month, I signed the Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act of 1998, a law based on my Administration's 1996 proposal to crack down on egregious child support evaders by creating a new felony offense for those who flee across State lines to avoid supporting their children.

However, there is much more that we can and must do. H.R. 3130 will build on this progress and help ensure that parents give their children all the support they need and deserve. First, the new law puts in place additional tough penalties for States that fail to automate their child support computer systems on time. Under

this new law, States that fail to establish these State-wide systems face automatic and escalating penalties, ranging from 4 percent of Federal child support enforcement funds for the first year to 30 percent for the fifth year in which a State fails to meet national certification standards. Second, H.R. 3130 incorporates a proposal that my Administration sent to the Congress last year to reward States for their performance on a wide range of key child support goals, such as the number of paternity establishments and child support orders, rather than only on cost-effectiveness, as current law provides. Third, the law will make it easier for States to secure medical support for children in cases in which the non-custodial parent has private health coverage, by facilitating the creation of a medical support notice that all health plans will recognize.

Many members of Congress, Administration officials, State officials, experts, and children's advocates worked together constructively in a bipartisan fashion to craft this valuable piece of legislation, and I wish to thank them for their efforts. In particular, I would like to thank Representatives Levin and Shaw, and Senators Moynihan, Roth, Rockefeller, and Baucus.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
July 16, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 3130, approved July 16, was assigned Public Law No. 105-200.

Statement on Senate Action on Food Safety Legislation

July 16, 1998

I welcome today's 66-33 vote to restore much needed funds to our food safety programs. Food safety should not be about politics; instead it must be about protecting our families and children. Today, the Senate put Americans first and partisanship last. With this money we will be able to improve safety inspections of foods, better educate the public on how to handle food

safely, improve research, and aid the effort to track food borne outbreaks such as salmonella and *E. coli*. We must continue to work together in the coming months on this issue and on the many other issues which the American people care about. The American people want action, not political wrangling.